

VZCZCXRO4754
PP RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEH KI #1472 2631513
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201513Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4821
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 001472

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [CG ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: BEMBA,S MEN FAN THE FLAMES IN THE WAKE OF
SEPTEMBER 18 FIRE

REF: KINSHASA 1470

11. (U) Summary: Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba's political party issued a strongly-worded statement September 19 charging that the fire that knocked his media outlets off the air the day before was a "criminal act" designed to prevent him from conducting campaigning. Bemba's political alliance, RENACO, issued a similar declaration. Such provocative statements are at odds with promises to calm the situation made by Bemba and other members of his party over the past two days. End summary.

12. (U) The Executive Secretary Thomas Luhaka of VP Bemba,s Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) issued a statement September 19 on behalf of the party denouncing as "a criminal act" the September 18 fire at the building housing MLC offices and Bemba,s radio and television stations. The fire destroyed essential broadcasting equipment of Bemba-owned CCTV, Canal Kin TV and Radio Liberte off the air and severely injured CCTV Director General Stephane Kitutu. Luhaka,s statement blamed unnamed people who do not accept political debate and freedom of speech for the act, but stated that the MLC will await the results of an investigation into incident. The party's patience in the face of such "attacks," the statement continues, must not be interpreted as an acceptance of arbitrary regime or solitary exercise of power.

13. (U) The MLC declaration reaffirmed the party's commitment to participate in a peaceful and responsible election campaign. It also stated that the MLC would never disturb public order, but reserves the legitimate right to defend itself and will fight any obstacle that could impede the second round of elections.

14. (U) The MLC-affiliated political coalition RENACO (Rally of Congolese Nationalists) issued a similar statement the same day signed by its deputy coordinator Charles Bofassa Djema. The declaration called the September 18 fire a terrorist act designed to disrupt the electoral process. It charged that the fire was part of a political strategy to damage Bemba's political fortunes and to keep him from campaigning freely.

15. (U) It also deplored persistent insecurity throughout the country, particularly in Kinshasa, and intimidation of voters by a "death squad" operating with impunity throughout the country. It further appealed for an independent inquiry into the causes of the fire. On Radio Okapi September 19, another MLC spokesman, Romain Nyimi, carried forth the same line in an encounter with government spokesman and Minister of Information Henri Mova Kakanyi, who rejected the MLC charge and insisted that an investigation be allowed to run its

course.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Such provocative and unsubstantiated charges by senior MLC officials are at odds with what Bemba himself has told us, and designed to reap political advantage from the incident. While the statements will keep alive the issue of perceived imbalance and lack of fairness in the political campaign, we note too that the Ambassador has been told that Bemba has already ordered replacement broadcast equipment. We are continuing to remind both the MLC and the Kabila camp need that their public statements will have definite repercussions and must be considered accordingly. End comment.

MEECE